



# Pogsara Via!

(Girls First!)



FINDINGS FROM THE NAVRONGO HEALTH RESEARCH CENTRE  
FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION ERADICATION INTERVENTION

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Navrongo Health Research Centre

## AN ORACLE ABOVE THE LAW

Circumcisers are becoming increasingly rare to find. But the *Pogsara Via!* team stumbled upon one recently. It took 1hr 52 mins to successfully split his mind into two... Share his perspectives on key issues in notes 8, 9, 10 & 11



Without gainful employment, Akurugo Atami-duko spends time at home with his uncle Agambire, staring blankly into an unknown future

**Your father died on August 5, 2003, at the peak of the circumcision season. Are you fully in-charge yet?**  
No. Not just yet.

**I am sorry to have to ask you this question, but how did die?**

He complained of abdominal pains shortly after he was released from jail on April 12, 2002. I sent him to the regional hospital in Bolgatanga. He got better and we returned home. He fell ill again at about the middle of 2003. Within a few days he had grown very weak, too weak to make it to the hospital. He succumbed to abdominal pains on August 5<sup>th</sup> 2003 and was buried peacefully at home.

**Why do people think you are the one most suitable to inherit your father?**

I suppose it's because I used to be close to him during my childhood when he practised. So people strongly believe

the oracle will choose me.

**How will you know if the oracle has chosen you or not and what happens if the lots fall on you?**

I will only know after the performance of my father's funeral, which I am not in a hurry to do. If the oracle chooses me I will plead with it to accept its yearly sacrifice without my having to necessarily cut women. I hear this is acceptable.

**How much is the sacrifice?**

A fowl, a dog and a goat. This is done once in a year.

**What if the oracle insists that you cut the women?**

Remember the law banning circumcision?

**Yes, the law under which your late father was convicted and jailed. How did it happen?**

It was in 1997. My father was caught in the act and arrested. It must have been either in August or September [the peak of circumcision]. I am not sure because I was not at home at the time of his arrest. He was arraigned before court and jailed for five years.

### Why five years?

For every girl he had circumcised that day when he was arrested, he was to go in for one year - he had circumcised five girls.



Akurugo Atami-duko's quiet neighbourhood at Sirigu-Busongo

### How did he view the action taken by the law?

He was defiant. It was his opinion that law is not the only thing we need to regulate human interactions and customs. He said he would rather face the rigours of the law than face his ancestors by abandoning the practice.

### How did the community receive the news of his arrest and incarceration?

Some were happy but I think most were angry.

### How did you feel about it?

I was not happy at all. It's just a tragic fact that many more girls would have been cut before he eventually gave it up. There were clear signs that he was no longer interested in doing it. It is not as if a circumciser is a murderer, a rapist, or a thief. If noone brings his or her daughter to a circumciser the girl could never get

circumcised.

### You must have a long history of female circumcision in your family?

On the contrary. It all started with my father.

### How did he become a circumciser?

It's a long story but I am going to cut it short. My late father used to be a prosperous trader, in the village sense of the word. He used to travel down south to dig up gold and resell it to medium scale dealers. He used to buy tracks of land down south to prospect for gold. Then once in a while he would come home and take along some young men to Kumasi to dig up the gold for him. Then one day to the utter amazement of the family, my father, with a swollen leg, limped into the house, disheveled and dejected. We all knew calamity had struck. When a soothsayer was consulted it emerged that the god of fertility who possesses people and makes them circumcise women, was on him to take up the trade, a preserve of his uncles from Zaare in Bolgatanga. My father is said to have fiercely resisted but his ailment got worse. As circumcision was a noble occupation at the time noone understood why a young man would accept to be afflicted this way when all he needed to do was to take up social service. People prevailed upon him saying they were sending their daughters across the border to circumcise because there was no circumciser nearby to do it. My father allegedly said he could never look into a woman's private part let alone cut anything from it. But when his health deteriorated and everyone knew he was going to die, he yielded.

### Did you believe this story?

It is not what I believe or not that matters. This happened long before I was born. I have been told that his uncles eventually came to perform the rites and he started [chopping off the roses]

*Continue story in Pogsara Yia! vol.1 no.10*

**Send questions or comments to: Pogsara Yia!**

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